

Schoolwide Budgetary Needs Assessment Summary and Reflection

Orinda Intermediate School (OIS) is a public middle school in Contra Costa County which lies in San Francisco's East Bay. The student population of 834 students is the majority white with the largest minority population of students representing Southeast Asia. There is a handful of students who are Latino and an even smaller number of African American. Orinda Union School District is one of the state's smallest districts comprised of only four elementaries and one middle school. Because of its size and location in an affluent Northern California suburb, the allocations of funds from the legislature is among the lowest in the state. Fortunately, parents and the larger Orinda community have recognized the deficit and historically have been fully supportive of the district's funding needs.

It is unusual for a public school to rely so heavily on private funds. But OUHD's financial circumstances have led the community to create an unusual public-private partnership under an umbrella organization called the Orinda Network for Education. "ONE Orinda" has the purpose of uniting "stakeholders to preserve and enhance (the district's) signature education programs and **provides for exceptional teachers and staff, promoting continued academic excellence for every student in Orinda's public schools**" (ONE, 2022). Those programs include an orchestra and jazz band, a debate team, a fully outfitted wood shop, art studio and two gyms. One is primarily used for assemblies, the other for athletic events for the wide-ranging number of sports teams (volleyball, basketball, cross country, flag football, etc.) that are supported on the OIS campus.

In another show of community support, two parcel tax proceeds are currently funding major renovation projects at every OUHD public school including Orinda Intermediate. OIS is building a new "student service center" on campus to include administrative and counselor offices, a staff lounge and a wellness center for students. In Wayne's mind the wellness center is necessary at a middle school. Wayne notes that middle schoolers are at a particularly fragile stage of their life as they transition from childhood to adulthood and therefore need extra emotional and social support.

Since Orinda Intermediate receives a large majority of funding from ONE Orinda, I elected to use its 2022-2023 site budget for my analysis and recommendations. ONE relies entirely on its yearly fundraising campaign to raise revenues for the needs of every school in the district. Typically, the goal of yearly fundraising exceeds one million dollars. The current budget for items for Orinda Intermediate alone totaled \$72,750. The budget breaks down spending by department, and includes lunch time and other clubs, supplies for every class (library and classroom books, PE equipment, computer software, generic classroom supplies, monies for specialty programs—like video production and woodshop, as well as memberships, dues, and any educationally-related travel expense or food bills.)

Nothing in the ONE budget seems to be off limits, save the larger expenses from teachers and staff salaries and large capital projects which are currently paid for by two parcel taxes that were passed in Orinda in the last ten years. Principal Stacy Wayne arrives at the needs of the school by surveying department heads who in turn survey individual teachers. Those requests are gathered and vetted to make sure they comply with the school mission “to remind our students that a complete education includes a sense of community” That includes an objective that aligns with PSEL 5 to “provide students with opportunities for success, build self-esteem, teacher leadership, responsibility, and citizenship while “developing skills in corporation, collaboration and teamwork” (OIS, 2022).

One key finding in comparing last years and this year’s budget is how little is overlooked and complies with the School Improvement Plan. Most every request from teachers is funded, no matter how small. In her dozen or so years with the district Wayne says the ONE Network has never refused funding requests by her or her department chairs if the funding can support student health and achievement. The budget also includes new technology equipment purchase of both hardware and software.

Another key finding is a funding appropriation made in the full site budget that concerned adding another administrator to the campus. This request falls under the responsibility of leaders outlined in PSEL 6 which highlights the need to preserve “student’s academic success and well-being.” Wayne says student behavioral problems became more acute during the return to school last year following the COVID lockdown. In fact, there were so many problems with students who seemed to forget how to socialize with their peers that Wayne demanded the school hire a “Dean of Students” to maintain order and supervise disciplinary issues in coordination with teachers, counselors, and parents. The Superintendent supported the move, and another associate principal position was added this year.

The generosity of the community in meeting the school needs combined with the results from the assessment survey revealed an area of concern not yet addressed in the budget. As has been noted in previous assignments, CAASPP scores in math have slipped at Orinda Intermediate by several points in the last 7 years. This hasn’t gone unnoticed by the math department. In fact, several math teachers who took the assessment were alarmed by the dropping scores and suggested a math intervention program. Special programs already exist at OIS to bolster the progress of students who excel in math but there are no specific assistance for students struggling in the subject.

Using the assessment survey, and teacher recommendations, an effective math intervention program should be identified and created for “lower-level classes” at OIS. Project-based learning should be stressed in the intervention. It is my recommendation that an aide should also be hired to work with students who need extra assistance.

The idea is one to which the administration would easily agree. In our budget discussions, principal Wayne shared information with me about a similar program

targeting language arts intervention. Like this existing program our math intervention program might not require another hire but instead administrators could rearrange workloads to create slightly larger classes while offering a .5 day to an existing math teacher and .5 for math intervention.

Going forward it is obvious how necessary assessment surveys can be. I will be sure to carry them with me when I become an administrator. While it seems that parental funding through the ONE Orinda Network “checks all the boxes,” when analyzing data on student performance and holding it up to departmental teachers, it is staff and faculty that often come up with the best solutions for meeting student needs.

National Policy Board for Educational Administration (2015). *Professional Standards for Educational Leaders 2015*. Reston, VA: Author

ONE Orinda. (2002). *Stronger together, brighter tomorrow*. Retrieved on November 9, 2022 from <https://www.oneorinda.org>.

Orinda Intermediate School. (2022) *About us*. <https://tinyurl.com/2hdjfe96>.